

# CLEMENCEAU PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE WOMEN OF ARGENTINA

## Family Life There "A Dream of Love Materialized," According to the Former Premier of France---He Comments Also on Gambling.

"Mor del Plata, the Common Meeting Ground for Wealthier Families."

This is the sixth of a series of articles giving his impressions of South America written by the former Premier of France.

By Georges Clemenceau.

THUS, then, we see that I had good ground for setting down as traits in the Argentine character a readiness to learn from Europe and to borrow all that is best in its utilitarian institutions, as well as a desire and capacity to carry forward any undertaking, whether public or private, to the furthest pitch of perfection, and even if possible beyond.

The danger in any rapid colonial growth is obviously to stop at the half way, and this, unavoidable at the outset, and fatally easy to achieve, must in time lead to draw off the attention from the steady, continuous effort without which no good results can be attained.

The more methodical men of the North always reproach the impulsive Latins with an inclination to stop at an enthusiastic start, leaving to the imagination the filling in of the blank left in their undertakings by this unsatisfactory system.

I must confess that when I set out for South America I expected to have to exercise the utmost forbearance if I wanted to escape the charge of being a harsh critic, for I was perforce somewhat influenced by the sociologists, and also by that current of public folly which, taking no account of consanguinity, directs our steps toward countries to which England and Germany have shown us the way. But not at all.

If the prodigious force of expansion of the great Republic of North America has inspired in the South American republics a fear of comparison, every impartial observer must, I think, recognize with pleasure the hardy and generous development of some of the best forces of futurity in these growing communities which are admittedly destined to assist in the building up of a higher and better humanity.

Buckle, whose mind was of no ordinary calibre, did not hesitate to affirm in his "History of Civilization" that the dominant force of soil and climate in Brazil was such that it must shortly become the cradle of a highly civilized and progressive community. Events have proved that this bold prophecy was strictly correct, as I shall have occasion to show later.

There are in the South American republics, as there are necessarily in the United States and elsewhere, varying degrees of realization. This is unavoidable at the beginning, where sacrifices must be made until ground space has acquired a certain value, but those countries which I have visited—the Argentine, Uruguay, and Brazil—have practically proved that they will not be satisfied with doing things by halves, and the power to work systematically until the highest possible finish has been put on whatever enterprise they take in hand is the best augury for the success of their future undertakings.

There is no need of a prolonged sojourn in Buenos Ayres to discover that this characteristic is conspicuous in the Argentine. I have mentioned the European aspect of his city—the least colonial looking probably of any place in South America. But I noticed at the same time that he refuses to be simply a Spaniard transplanted, although society, the upper class of Buenos Ayres, traces its descent with more or less authenticity from the conquistadores, and did originally issue from the Iberian Peninsula.

If we go further and inquire what other influence, besides that of soil and climate, has been exercised over the European stock in the basin of the Rio de la Plata, we are bound to be struck with the thought that the admixture of Indian blood must count for something.

The negro element, never numerically strong, appears to have been completely absorbed. There is very little trace of African blood.

On the other hand, without leaving Buenos Ayres, you cannot fail to be struck by some handsome half-castes to be seen in the police force and fire brigade, for example, and the regularity of the most unassuming features is very noticeable to the most unsuspicious eye.

Directly I left the Province of Buenos Ayres to travel northward I found the prevalence of the half-breed very pronounced. The Indian of South America, although closely related to the redskin of North America, is in every respect infinitely superior. He had achieved a certain degree of civilization, and was brutally beaten by the "conquistadores."

In the northern provinces of the Argentine there still exist a few large native settlements, treated, alas! by the Government with but scant consideration. I heard too many stories about this sort of thing to be possible. Not but what acts of savage barbarism can be proved against the Indians, such as the abominable trap they set for the peaceful Crevaux Mission in Bolivia, which ended in the massacre. We must, however, in justice, remember that the use of force as the sole argument with a primitive people is not calculated to lead them to find any other for themselves. A higher sentimentality may deplore the fact. Our implacable civilization has issued a death warrant to all races that cannot adapt themselves to our evolution, and against the sentence there is no appeal.

Yet the native races of the South are not, like those of the North, incapable of steady labor. I have seen native Indians employed even at Tucuman in the factory of M. Hilleret. Neither does he lack rectitude in his own intelligence. The difficulty is to adapt facinorous developed in primitive surroundings to the larger demands of civilized activity, and this it is that prevents the aboriginal from making room for himself in the new organism imported from Europe with the white race. With greater powers of resistance than the redskins of the other hemisphere, he is doomed to disappear, but, unlike his

northern brother, he can never quite die out, since he has thoroughly impregnated with his blood the living flesh of his conqueror.

I am not going to pretend to settle in a word the problem of the fusion of races. I will only observe that the influx of Indian blood in the masses—and also to a very considerable extent in the upper classes—cannot fail to leave a permanent trace in the Argentine type notwithstanding the steady current of immigration.

And if I were asked to say what were the elemental qualities contributed to the coming race by the native strain, I should be inclined to think that his simplicity, dignity, nobility, and decision of character would modify in the happiest way the turbulent European blood of future generations.

After all, the Argentine who declines to be Spanish has perhaps very good reasons for his action. Here he has succeeded better than in the Iberian peninsula in ridding himself of the Moorish strain that gave him his lofty chivalry, but which has yet so lamentably chained the race in the Oriental conception of a rigid theocracy. Why should not the native blood have taken effect already upon the European mixture, and, with the aid of those unknown forces which we may class under the collective term of "climate," have prepared and formed a new people to be known henceforth by the obviously suitable name of Argentines? All that I can say is that there are Argentine characteristics now plainly visible in this conglomeration of the Latin races.

The objection may be made that the "Yankee" also shows strongly marked characteristics which distinguish him from the Anglo-Saxon stock, while we know that he is wholly unaffected by other than European strains.

This is undeniable, and in his case, soil, climate, and the extraordinary mixture of European types suffice to explain modifications which are apparently converging toward the creation of a type from a sub-type.

It is to my mind remarkable that the change undergone by the Americanized Englishman, passing from the Puritan rigidity of the North to the aristocratic bearing of the South, has for some reason ended in a rare vitalization of every kind of energy and initiative, and in the characteristic formula of a universal "go-ahead-ism," while the South American, having begun his career by a series of extravagant phases, both as regards his private and public life, which have earned for him the mistrust of Europe, is now manifestly settling down and developing a marked tendency to adopt and depress these orderly methods of which the Northern races are so proud, while still retaining his taste for Latin culture.

It is easier to generalize about the Argentine character than to probe it to the bottom. It is naturally a progressive, and that superior education throws into the greatest relief exactly those characteristics which lend themselves to generalization.

The American of the North is exceedingly hospitable. At a letter of introduction his house is thrown open to you. He establishes you in his household, and while keeping himself free to continue his own occupations, he leaves you to your own devices.

The Argentine is no less friendly, but he shows it in a different manner. Although myself quite outside the business world, I was able to see enough of it to believe that if money has the same prestige here as elsewhere its cult is softened by a kindly generosity, and thus the keenness of the struggle for life is at least tempered by a charming and general suavity.

In their family relations, the differences between the social ideals of the North and South Americans are plainly visible. The family tie is stronger in the Argentine than perhaps in any other land. The rich, unlike those of other countries, take pleasure in having large families and marry young. One lady boasted in my presence of having thirty-four descendants—children and grand children—gathered around her table. Everywhere family anniversaries are carefully observed and all take pleasure in celebrating them. The greatest affection prevails and the greatest devotion to the parent root-tree.

Not that the Argentine woman would appear to be a particularly admirable mother, according to our standard. On the contrary, she is accused of sending out into the world very ill brought up children. If so, then, are we to explain the contradictory fact that such children become the most courteous of men? Perhaps, a certain wildness in youth should be regarded as the noisy but salutary apprenticeship to liberty.

All that can be seen of the public morals is most favorable. The women—generally extremely handsome in a super-Spanish style, and often fascinating in the extreme—enjoy a reputation that seems well justified, of being extremely virtuous. I will not be impertinent enough to offer a description of Argentine beauty. Let me only mention the large black eyes, heavily shaded, the delicately golden skin beneath which there pulses a generous blood, a soft and ever youthful smile. I heard too much to their credit to believe anything against them. From what I saw, they appear to lead a life that is very far removed from conventional sins, but of their feelings, or passions, if I may be permitted the word, I dare not risk a word, for I am wholly in ignorance on the subject. Whether or no they are capable of living for love, of experiencing all its joy and its pain, I know not, since I was not admitted into their confidence. The most I could venture to say would be that they did not give me the impression of being made for the powerful reaction of life such as we know it in Europe.

I hope none will see in this remark the slightest attempt at a criticism. We have only to remember that the family life in the Argentine is a dream of love materialized, and guard against their dangerous tendency toward an overabundance of flesh. Not at all. Social conventions do not allow of this.

The ancients, men of mature mind, maintaining with the Delphic Apollo that excess in all things is a defect, Buenos Ayres has not yet arrived at this degree of wisdom, and women in society, not satisfied with giving themselves up wholly to a life of virtue, have elected to add a further piquancy to their reputation by a line of conduct that leads itself in no whit to even the most indifferent and colorless of gossip. In order to give no ground for scandal they must guard against even a stray encounter that might be commented on. Hence the fair sex of the capital will only venture to Palermo on condition that they meet there only men of the best breeding, who know that to stop on a public highway to chat with a lady whom they may meet in the evening in some salon would be an unpardonable breach of etiquette. Decidedly, we are far from Europe!

To complete the exotic air of the place add to the above that all husbands are jealous, or at least so they say, and it must be supposed there is some foundation for the statement. As far as I was able to judge, they are as amiable as their wives, and appeared by no means to harbor tragic intentions toward any man likely to arouse their resentment. No. But if by chance after dinner you permit yourself to talk quietly with two or three ladies, and that in the usual chit and flow of a salon you are for a moment left alone with one, be sure that her husband will promptly appear on the scene, more genial than ever, to claim his share in the talk.

At home this would appear strange, since we do not impose the spectacle of our private intimacies upon the public. Yet might not this very air of detachment which we insist upon lead, both in public and in private, to some of the tragedies of life? Is it wrong for a married couple to love each other, and when two hearts are in this way united how can a feeling so powerful fail at times to betray itself by some outward manifestation? Let us take head lest in laughing at others we denounce ourselves.

A man in a very high position, father of a lad of 20, volunteered with much candor the information that in all the course of his married life he had nothing to reproach himself with, and he added that if he had been so unhappy as to fail in his duty, he should have considered himself unworthy of her who had given him all her life.

No doubt the woman of whom he spoke, who was standing a few yards from us at the moment, was in every way worthy of his homage. Yet I could but wonder, as I listened to his simple and noble talk, whether many Frenchmen would with equal simplicity have taken a foreigner into their confidence on such a subject, and whether a single one could be found who would not have blushed to make the avowal?

Whatever my reader may secretly think on the point he will, I hope, agree with me that the Argentine in these delicate matters has decidedly the best of us, and his sane morality gives the best possible augury for the community he is building up.

I should like to say something about the Argentine girl. The difficulty is that I never saw her. Every one knows that in the north of America the young girl is the principal social institution. She has got herself so much talked about that neither Europe nor Asia can help knowing her. The Argentine girl, as in France, is a mystery. I have reason to believe that opportunities for indulgence are not lacking. But it is as well to preserve the strictest mystery on the subject, for Buenos Ayres gives me the impression of being very like a provincial town, and very like a provincial town, he is not strictly true, I am not seeking to present the Argentine husband as the phoenix of the world. Money is so plentiful that evil thoughts come unthought, and in the event of temptation arising, I have reason to believe that opportunities for indulgence are not lacking. 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# CLEMENCEAU PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE WOMEN OF ARGENTINA

(Continued from Page 2.)

been prettily called a "Venice of gardens."

Imagine in this setting plantations of trees of every kind clinging to the shores of the floating islands, and reflected in the mirror of the clear water; imagine orchards without end gorgeous in their Spring or Autumn dress; fill the green glades and groves with a profusion of wild and cultivated flowers; call up before your mind's eye a vision of boats, large and small, filled with happy youth and gliding to the music of the oars up and down the water channels beneath the branches of the trees to an accompaniment of song and laughter, and you will have some idea of the attractions which the "Tigre" offers to its visitors.

"Quintas," (country houses, chalets built on piles, hotels, restaurants, wine-shops, establishments of all sorts for all classes of society, who mingle here and find rest and change after a busy season in the city, offer a peaceful refuge for leisure hours to be spent on these enchanted streams. Higher up still, passing some miles of wood and water plants, there are places still more picturesque to be found, where man as yet has not put his hand and where one drifts quietly down canals half blocked with flowering shrubs and trees, coming out again into clear water by the waterway to the Parana, followed by the big Paraguay boats laden with oranges, whose decks gleam in the brilliant sunshine like fanciful galleys of gold.

The "Tigre" is reached by train, which in twenty minutes places you on board the skiff engaged beforehand. M. Villanueva sticks at nothing, and he had planned to make the trip in his motor car on a road that was said to be finished. Roads, however, are not a strong

point in this country, owing to the lack of stone. After a journey that reminded us at times of the water leap at Auteuil we reached the "Tigre," the car, by some miracle, still holding together, but ourselves much shaken in our inward parts. Our first thought on reaching the railway station was to take a little rest in easy chair or couch.

Since the subject of furniture and the hotels that provide it has thus cropped up, I may take the opportunity of saying that in the Argentine, as in Brazil, the internal arrangements of the houses show that the greater part of the time in this land is spent out of doors. Italy,

with its open-air life, was naturally the land to which the Argentine turned for architects to supply overdecorated furniture, meant rather to look at than to use, and when cheap German goods have added their clumsy lines to the rest, one may be pardoned for finding a lack of comfort as of grace, according to French ways of thinking. In aristocratic salons the best Parisian upholsterers have at least left their mark—with a certain crowding of arrangement, if the truth must be told. Here and there some bits of "antiques" were even visible, lending invariably an effect of simplicity and just proportion. My criticisms must be

taken in the most general way possible. It is chiefly in the hotels that one feels the furthest from Europe, and this in spite of a manifest attempt to do things well. A continual change of servants and a bad division of labor insure infinite discomfort for the traveler. There is, it is true, central heating, but it works irregularly. Is the pampero blowing? The pipes of the radiator shake the window panes with their tempestuous snorting and bubbling, waking you out of your sleep with the suddenness of their noise, but they diffuse only cold air. An electric heating apparatus hastily put in is used to supplement the other. Do you

want to lock up some papers in a drawer? Perhaps after a long search you may find a key, but it will assuredly fit no lock in your room. And as I was rude enough to insist, the manager, anxious to oblige me with something that would lock, ordered his own safe to be placed in my apartment, with all his accounts therein. When I opened the drawer which had been placed at my disposal I found money in it! Oh, what marvelous hospitality!

The dearness of living in Buenos Aires—and of the rents in particular—has been remarked on by many travelers. Chimneys are now being added to the new houses. The European who comes to the Argentine for the Winter months—June, July, August—can but be delighted with the change. But he will suffer keenly from the cold, for if the sun shines perseveringly in a cloudless sky, an icy south wind will prove very trying to the European who is not accustomed to such sharp contrasts. As for the Summer season every one talked of its charms, the principal being apparently to go and wipe one's brow at the "Tigre" or at Mar del Plata, in default of the mountain resorts within reach of the Brazilians.

Difficult to speak of Argentine cookery—which is rather international—always excepting those households that boast a French cook. The influence of Italy with her pastes and cheeses predominates. Little variety in the fish. Deplorably tough meat for the reason that it is always consumed too fresh. Vegetables without much character. Too much tropical fruit or European fruit spoiled by the effect of the tropics. Lobsters and European fish imported by freezing apparatus, not to be recommended. Excellent table water. The national dishes: "Puchero," boiled beef, excellent, the animal not killed the same morning; "asado," lamb roasted whole, savory souvenir of my excursions in Greece.